

Fulcrum in Afrika



Libya, a nation where the peoples revolution of 2011 was co-opted by external predatory force, has since been forgotten by the western proletariat. For the right it lives in their minds as a jumping point for “illegal immigrants to penetrate the European “garden” and in the lefts as a mental exercise to glorify a dead man that had cosied up to the west in their final years and paid the ultimate price for it. This reactionary framing obscures the daily reality of the Libyan working class who will, as always, bare the brunt of intensified foreign exploitation and local comprador betrayal. As revolutionaries operating within the imperial core, our inaction has allowed the situation to escalate, we must now learn from the past and move forward with new and innovative strategies to not betray our duty to aid the working classes in the periphery of empire. This piece will focus on the events leading up to and within December 2024, as these will prove decisive in the Afrikan and global class struggle of 2025.

Foreign Influence:

The Dbeibah Government in the west

In the west, whilst they enjoy continued support from Erdogan's turkey, the Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh led Government of National Unity (GNU) has been building closer ties to with Italy's fascist prime minister Georgia Meloni, who has promised to reopen direct flights between the two nations in January 2025, enabling Libyan bourgeoisie to spend extravagantly in Milan and Rome. In exchange, for first time in 10

years as of October 2024, onshore drilling contracts for Italian energy company Eni and British oil giant BP have reopened, giving them direct access to Libyan fossil fuels.

Khalifa Haftar's mismatched allies in the east

Meanwhile self-styled field Marshal of the Libyan National Army (LNA) Khalifa Haftar, a former Gaddafi general turned CIA asset whilst exiled in the US state of Virginia, continues to attract unlikely allies since 2014, including UAE, RSF, Saudi Arabia, France, Russia and Egypt. While many of these backers have scaled back their involvement over time, Russia remains steadfast in its support. This commitment highlights Moscow's long-term strategy of using Libya and other African nations to counterbalance western influence in the region, especially considering France's greatly diminished military and political presence in "francophone" Africa over the last few years.

America, always hungry for a slice

Since the beginning of the revolution on the 17th of February 2011 local revolutionaries had urged no foreign involvement and within a year were in the process of holding an election with approximately 1,200 candidates registered to run for the 80 proportional seats, of which 540 (43 per cent) were women under the zebra system, compared to 30% of sitting parliament member in the UK being women around the same time. America, going against the explicit wishes of the Libyan working classes to self-determination, led a NATO bombing campaign that in large part led to the destabilization we see today in Libya. Since then, the US presents itself as a neutral party, pushing "for dialogue" between Libya's various factions when all the while sowing enough managed chaos through extremist proxy forces to facilitate resource extraction and preventing real reconciliation between Tripolitania, Fezzan and Cyrenaica, the nations three main regions.

Military might:

Libya is another area, like in Syria, where Russian and Turkish interests clash and where both have sought to resolve/claim these interests through military means. Over the last few months Turkey and Russia have been steadily increasing their military presence in Libya as both nations wish to solidify their vested interests within Libya before another crisis, such as the recent turmoil surrounding the governance of the Libyan central bank, occurs and disrupts the extraction of resources from Libya again.

Turkeys growing stake

In 2019 the GNU and Turkey signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MoU), the first an agreement that would extend both Libya's and Turkey's international maritime zones to merge into a special economic zone that overlap on fossil fuel rich areas within the Mediterranean, and cover parts of Greece's claimed international waters. The second a military and training agreement, allowing Turkey to maintain a permanent military presence in the west of Libya with around 3000 forces in total split between 2000 TAF soldier and around 800 pmc's from the Turkish company SADAT. The main goal of these personnel, other than spreading Ankara's imperialist tendrils in the region, is to train Dbeibah's GNU military forces such as the infamous unit 444, alongside certain militia forces loyal to the GNU, at locations such as the Tarjoura Joint Training Ground Training and Exercise Centre and the Al-Khums special forces centre, near the historic site of Leptis Manga. Turkish military influence has also extended itself to key airbases such as the ones at Al-Watiya, Misrata, and Mitiga, operating tb2 drones, of Ukrainian and Armenia-Azerbaijani war infamy, and

A400M transport aircraft out of them. Other than military involvement there has been a steady increase in economic projects, valued at \$120 billion, including the building of a new airbase by Misurata. Within the new compound there have been sightings of the Akinci UCAV, a significant evolution from tb2 drones that have historically been operated by Turkish and GNU forces. These developments highlight Ankara's ambitions to cement its imperialist reach in Libya.

Russia's pivot: from covert to open involvement

On the 4th of December it was reported that Haftar's forces must ask permission before entering several Russian military sites in the east of Libya. This change in practice highlights how Russia's role in Libya has evolved, shifting from "extra judicial" and "deniable involvement" primarily through the Wagner group, first arriving in the nation in 2018 playing a key role in Haftar's unsuccessful 2019 siege of Tripoli that reignited the civil war and was given the green light by the then white house national security advisor John R. Bolton, to direct state military involvement. Ilyushin il-76 planes have been spotted brining in military equipment and work has been underway to improve key airfields in eastern Libya to prepare them for military use. Moscow has also been in talks over the last year to potentially set up a naval port in Libya, this would be its second in the Mediterranean, although nothing official has been agreed on. No longer worried to sidestep and tread lightly around international law, Russia solidifies its presence in north Afrika (Sahel nations, Libya, Sudan), and the near east (Syria).

Local sentiment:

While most Libyans agree that their future should be determined without foreign interference, the last 13 years has not afforded the Libyan worker much agency and so the present sentiment is that Russia would be the better ally over European/Turkish/UAE/western support. Despite many not counting on much from whom Russia currently supports within Libyan Politics, namely Khalifa Haftar, they do not trust the other forces as Erdogan has lost a great footing within the psyche of the Libyan worker due to his inaction towards Israeli aggression in both Palestine and Lebanon, and the exposing Erdogan's long standing and deep trade relations with israel, which amount to \$7 billion annually, completely dispelling the myth of Erdogan as a bulwark for Sunni thought and values in the region and the larger Ummah. Russia is also seen as a "protector" of conservative values and a vehicle to combat western/American thought and liberal values, and so support for them does not come as a shock as recent elements within Libya are trying to exploit right wing conservative sentiments for political clout. One recent example comes with the announcement from the GNU's minister of interior Emad Trabelsi, trying to enforce a reactionary morality police within the capital Tripoli, in an attempt to impose rigid guidelines on public behaviour within Tripoli, requiring women to wear headdresses, imposing restrictions on youth hair and clothing styles, banning gender mixing in public and placing new limitations on women's movements. However, these measures are reminiscent of reactionary Wahhabi thought and are not natural elements within Libya's predominantly matriarchal cultural memory. These new measures were met with swift and loud backlash from the Libyan worker and led to these measures being swiftly downplayed and dismissed by Dbeibah and backtracked to the point of not realising the laws through a physical policing unit.

Post-Collapse of Bashar al-Assad's Syria:

Implications for Afrika

This article was initially drafted before the Lebanese-Israeli “ceasefire” and the subsequent resurgence of the Syrian civil war, culminating in the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime and the withdrawal of Russian and Iranian forces from Syria. The intricacies around the situation in Syria lie outside the scope of this article, but the core question remains: *What does the fall of “Bashar's Syria” mean for Afrika?*

Russian Withdrawal and Strategic Repositioning

Russia's exit from Syria signals a broader recalibration of its foreign policy, likely negotiated with Turkey. This shift has allowed Turkey to expand its influence in Syria in exchange for Russia consolidating its presence in Libya. Indicators of this strategy include Russia's bolstering of eastern Libyan bases as mentioned before, the arrival of Syrian Air Force officers in LNA-controlled territories, and the deployment of additional resources into Libyan military infrastructure. Reports also suggest that advanced S-300 and S-400 SAM systems have been relocated from Syria to eastern Libya, further reinforcing Russia's military footprint in the region and securing its operational capabilities.

The loss of Tartus, Russia's sole Mediterranean naval base, compounds this realignment. With Turkey closing the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits to warships in 2022, Russian naval assets are effectively blocked from Mediterranean access via Crimea. This sudden strategic vacuum suggests that Russia may pursue a permanent naval base on Libyan soil more seriously, which would pose a direct threat to the western grip on natural resource extraction within Libya as such a disruption may be a viable geopolitical tactic for Russia as it is one of the last cheap oil and gas resources that the EU has access to, particularly critical after the Nord Stream pipelines' sabotage and subsequent shutdown.

The Turkish-Qatari Energy Play

In parallel, Turkey and Qatar appear poised to exploit the situation further by advancing plans for an LNG pipeline running through Syria into Turkey and eventually Europe. This would serve as a cheaper alternative to American LNG, and potentially partially mitigating Europe's ongoing energy crisis, that was created by the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Normalisation in Tripoli

Another factor pointing towards a powershift in Libya is the announcement by the Director of the European affairs department at the ministry of foreign affairs, Abu Bakr Al-Taweel, met with the Russian ambassador on the 12th of December to confirm that the Russian embassy will soon reopen and conduct its work from its new headquarters in the capital Tripoli. Giving a direct line to the GNU and potentially side-stepping Haftar and the LNA in the long run. However, on the same day the Russian embassy issued a warning to its citizens to not travel to Libya as the situation there is still volatile and is a “danger to life and health,” especially in the western part” which leaves one wondering what is store for the Libyan proletariat that still has the 2019 invasion of Tripoli still fresh in their minds.

Conclusion

The collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime underscores a realignment of Russian and Turkish strategic interests in the Middle East and North Afrika. Russia's withdrawal from Syria has cemented their focus for increased military and economic investments in Afrika, with Libya and the Sahel emerging as focal points, a stark change in posture from recent years and it is to be seen how western imperialists will react to this change.

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A London based communist, that holds the global worker in their heart and actions.

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